

# Record

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## 1,700 fill MC Coliseum for Challenge

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

From Blue Springs in the north to Pascagoula along the Gulf Coast, more than 1,700 students and chaperones flocked to Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton on December 29-30 for the 2008 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge.

For their effort, they heard preaching by Jon Daniels, pastor of Country Woods Church, Byram, and youth evangelist Robbie Robison of Franklin, Tn. The Tom Edwards Band of Clinton provided praise and worship during the two-day event. Mark Eckel, founder of Splat Experience in Claypool, In., made a return trip after his appearance at the 2007 Challenge to share his unique hand-painting testimony.

"There were about 40 professions of faith and 150 decisions for Christ, of which we are aware," said Don Lum, evangelism director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which sponsored the annual event. "The feedback we received from the students who attended the Challenge was uniformly positive."

More than 128 Mississippi Baptist churches were represented at the 2008 Challenge. Lum said many pastors take advantage of the Challenge to spend "quality time" with the students who attend their churches.

"We have a lot of pastors who make time in their busy schedules to drive their young people to Clinton for the

Challenge," Lum said. "Most pastors are pressed for time among the many ministries in their churches, and sometimes the students get left out. The Challenge gives a pastor the opportunity to set aside some time that he can devote exclusively to be with the students in his church."

"That's special to the students, and special for the pastor, too."

The 2008 Challenge was the 30th anniversary of the event, which was first held at the former Jackson facilities of Broadmoor Church, which is now located in Madison. It was called the Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference at the time.

"As a youth minister, I brought my students to the Challenge every year and I knew it had the potential to become a great event in Mississippi Baptist life. I can tell you it has really grown since those early days," Lum said.

The Challenge eventually outgrew the host churches and was moved to the 2,000-seat A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. Mississippi College is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

"Mississippi College has always done a fine job of hosting the Challenge. The school's security department was very helpful. I appreciate all the things the school does to ensure the success of the event every year," said Lum, who also expressed thanks to First Church, Clinton, for hosting breakout sessions at the church's facilities across College Street from Mississippi College.

"The City of Clinton, and especially the city's police department, went out of their way to help us. The adult volunteers from First Church, Magee, who managed the registration process, were invaluable," Lum said. "There were so many people and organizations who helped us and I don't want to leave out any of them. Thanks to everyone who helped make this huge event run so smoothly."

Breakout session leaders for the 2008 Challenge included:



FROM THE WORD - Jon Daniels, pastor of Country Woods Church, Byram, preaches at the December 30 morning session of the 2008 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge at Mississippi College in Clinton. More than 1,700 students and chaperones attended the annual event, sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

- Eric Bean, student pastor at First Church, Purvis.
- Jon Cooper, minister to students at Highland Church, Meridian.
- Brad Van Cleave, student and recreation minister at First Church, Magee.
- Gary Permenter, founder of Gary Permenter Ministries in Columbus.
- Wayne Hudson, founder of Complete in Christ Ministries of Kosciusko and current president of the Conference of Mississippi Baptist Evangelists.

Committee members who planned the 2008 Challenge included Lum, Bean, Van Cleave, Shannon Slover, student minister at First Church, Laurel, and Brandon Lewis, student pastor at First Church, Oxford.

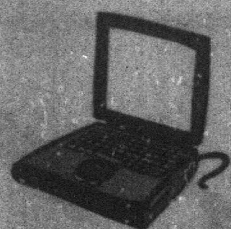
The 2009 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge will be held December 28-29 at A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton.

For more information, contact the Evangelism Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org. Web site: www.mbcb.org.



PRAISE - The Tom Edwards Band of Clinton leads in praise and worship at the December 30 morning session of the 2008 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge at Mississippi College in Clinton. The 2008 Challenge marked the 30th anniversary of the statewide event sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)





## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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## Dear Legislator ...

**T**he 2009 session of the Mississippi Legislature is revving up to full speed, as proposed legislation moves to committees and will soon be coming up on a series of deadlines.

As anyone knows who even casually tracks the annual three-month sessions of the Legislature, many bills are introduced but relatively few make it into law. The complex set of checks and balances both inside the legislative process and in the broader branches of state government have a tendency to winnow the hundreds and hundreds of bills that are filed and pre-filed for each session.

Legislators have to absorb their share of criticism, cynicism, and caricature during their time under the hoary domes of the New Capitol in downtown Jackson. Some of the ridicule showered on them is likely deserved (by some of them, anyway), but a fair amount is not deserved.

They are, after all, our fellow Mississippians. For every citizen who couldn't find their way to either chamber in the Capitol but feels free to regularly slam legislators, there are at least a few of us who realize that most legislators

are well-meaning people who must put aside their families, businesses, and community activities for one-quarter of each year to come to Jackson for the session.

That's no small sacrifice, so it would behoove us to occasionally tell them how much we appreciate the effort even as we loudly complain about what we perceive they are doing or not doing.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) has some helpful hints on how to make contact with legislators, how to get a point across without dooming favored legislation, and how to follow up on the progress of important measures:

- The best communicating is done face-to-face. Make an appointment and be on time. Bring an outline of the one or two main issues you want to discuss. Be brief, recommend specific solutions, and leave a written summary of your important points.

- It's fair to ask the legislator for his/her position on the bills in which you are interested. Don't take it personally if the legislator disagrees. Rather than argue, discuss differences in a pleasant manner.

- If a personal visit is not possible, write your legislator. Writing can save a legislator's time (a plus in your favor) and provides a record of your position on proposed legislation. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018.

- Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at [www.ls.state.ms.us](http://www.ls.state.ms.us).

- Do your research. Know the bills about which you are writing, and include any specific information you have such as the bill number and details. Bill status can be attained by calling (601) 359-3719 while the legislature is in session, or by going to [www.ls.state.ms.us](http://www.ls.state.ms.us).

- Telephone calls do not substitute for personal visits and letters. When telephoning legislators, however, make efficient use of your time with them. Identify yourself and the bills you are for or against (again, one or two main issues is a good limit). Explain your reasoning and let them know how you want them to vote.

- The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770. Just as with personal visits and letters, end the conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

- Citizens can request to testify before committees about bills they strongly support or oppose. Find out the name of the appropriate committee chairman and contact him/her as soon as possible.

**"IT'S GOOD TO FEEL NEEDED AGAIN."**



sible. If given the opportunity to testify, get to the point quickly and be prepared to answer any questions legislators may have about your position.

The CAC, a ministry funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, stands ready to assist Mississippi Baptists who want to get involved in this grand process of self-governance we enjoy in our state and nation. They can be reached at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. Fax: (601) 292-3350. E-mail: [rmccollum@christianaction.com](mailto:rmccollum@christianaction.com).

Take the time to get involved, or else just be content with whatever comes out of the legislative pipeline. Those are really our only two choices.

## Black churches urged to use worship to make disciples

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)** — "In the traditional black church, most people only attend the worship service," said Jay Wells, director of LifeWay Christian Resources' ministry to black churches.

"We need to move them beyond the experience in the worship service to become disciples," Wells told several hundred leaders of black churches attending a National Black Sunday School Conference at LifeWay's headquarters in Nashville.

"The percentage of the population attending church is declining and the influence of the church is getting weaker. The commitment level of people is getting low," Wells said, whereas, "The early church was concerned about what God called them to do, not what the church could do for them."

Breakout sessions and electives during the two-day conference addressed such topics as how to reach teens in a hip-hop culture and the development of a Growth-Oriented Sunday School class (GOSS). Two GOSS tracks were offered — one for those new to the theory and an alumni track for those who learned about the strategy at the national conference in 2007.

Characteristics of a GOSS church strategy include:

- An emphasis on getting everyone in a small group, not just children.

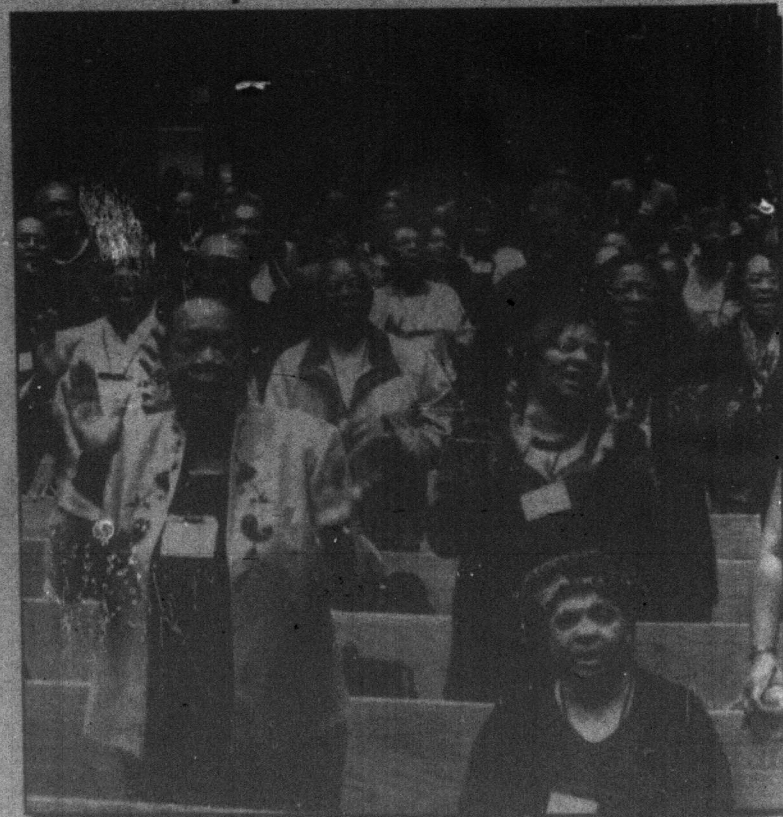
- Teaching for spiritual transformation, not just information.

- Focus on adults.

- Sunday School as a foundational strategy for leading people to faith in Jesus Christ and for building on-mission Christians through Bible study groups that engage people in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry and worship.

Chandra Bennett, editor of LifeWay's new urban/multi-cultural curriculum, YOU, challenged Sunday School leaders to see their ministries as opportunities for spiritual transformation for themselves and their class members.

"Spiritual transformation is God's work of changing a believer into the likeness of Jesus by creating a new identity in Christ and by empowering a lifelong relationship of love, trust and obedience to glorify God," Bennett said. "You can only impact others in Sunday School when you are being transformed yourself."



**PRaising THE LORD** — Approximately 350 people attended the recent National Black Sunday School Conference at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. As predominantly white churches in the Southern Baptist Convention have plateaued, ethnic churches and church plants have skyrocketed. (BP photo)



# Mohler counters mag on same sex marriage

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Newsweek's recent cover story seeking to make a "biblical case for gay marriage" runs directly counter to 2,000 years of Christian history that interprets Scripture as rejecting same-sex relations, R. Albert Mohler Jr. said on National Public Radio's Talk of the Nation program.

Mohler, president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., appeared on the show Dec. 15 with Lisa Miller, senior faith reporter for Newsweek, who wrote the article in which she argues that the Bible is mostly silent about same-sex marriage and, therefore, does not condemn it.

"Let's face it, what the sum and substance of this cover story really attempts to do is to say that Christians have basically been wrong for the better part of 20 centuries in understanding the Scripture and that the vast majority of believers in this country are wrong in believing that same-sex marriage is prohibited by scriptural injunction, and that's no understatement."

"You're talking about an extremely thin slice of a far-left denominational core that is even contemplating same-sex marriage. What is really interesting here is that Newsweek decided to write on the religious case or to try to propose a religious case for same-sex marriage, and I think it's fairly safe to say that among the vast majority of believers, it's falling flat and to no surprise," Mohler said.

In the article, Miller makes what she calls "three-pronged religious argument" supporting same sex marriage. First, she asserts that marriage today "looks so unlike the examples of marriage in the Bible which include polygamy and adultery among Old Testament figures." Further, she argues that many progressive Bible scholars view as questionable the texts in Scripture that condemn homosexuality. Finally, she insists that the Old and New Testaments provide differing pictures of marriage.

These three reasons, Miller argued, offer suggestive evidence that Scripture does not condemn same-sex marriage.

Miller admitted that Newsweek published the article in response to the passage of Proposition 8 in California. Through the passage of Prop 8 in the Nov. 4 presidential election, voters overturned the state Supreme Court's legalization of same sex marriage.

To reach her conclusion that the Bible does not condemn gay marriage, Miller's article asserts that the Bible is a "living book," the interpretation of which must change as culture evolves in its comprehension of truth — but this hermeneutical method represents a vast departure from the way historic Christianity has understood Scripture, Mohler retorted.

"She [Miller] said you either believe... that [the Bible is] more or less a human book marked by history, and we correct it by our understanding," Mohler said, "or you believe as I believe and as evangelical Christians and the most conservative believers in the Judeo-Christian traditions have always believed, that we have to understand and interpret the Scripture with the goal of obeying it."

"We genuinely believe that [the Bible] is not a prison into which we are forced by God; it is indeed His gift whereby He shows us how He would have us live not only for His glory, but for our good."

To Miller's argument for the acceptance of same sex marriage on the grounds that social mores have changed profoundly since biblical times, Mohler noted that both the Bible and the light of nature view heterosexual marriage as normative.

"Even where Scripture has never reached, even where the Judeo-Christian Scriptures have never had a direct influence, by natural law and by natural reasoning, the institu-

GOODBYE, DUBAI GEEZERS 2.0: SECRETS OF LONGEVITY

## Newsweek

### The Religious Case for Gay Marriage

By Lisa Miller



December 15, 2008 cover of Newsweek magazine

tion of marriage as a heterosexual institution privileged for procreation and the raising of children has been central to civilization," Mohler said, "and I believe it is simply no accident."

"Lisa Miller is right, sociologically speaking, that mores change, and I think one of the great brakes on mores absolutely falling into irrationality has been the institution of marriage. I think once you compromise that, not only on biblical grounds, but just looking at the way the world works, just looking at the evidence of the natural world around us, then you're really inviting chaos into civilization itself. It's going to be hard to prevent anything once you make marriage a malleable, plastic, liquid institution."

Mohler and Miller also appeared together on the nationally syndicated Laura Ingraham Show the previous

week. On that program, Miller said her article was attempting to provide from the Bible an affirmative "religious answer" for homosexuals to the question, "Who can get married?" — but making a positive case for gay marriage from the Bible is impossible, Mohler said.

"There is no biblical case for gay marriage," Mohler said. "The Bible knows what marriage is, and when she [Miller] says the issue is who can get married, you have to turn around and say, 'You can't possibly talk about that until you talk about what marriage is,' and when you look at the Bible, you can't make a case for marriage being anything other than heterosexual, other than by turning [the Bible] on its head, which is what Newsweek tried to do in this cover story. I don't think it's working."

### Looking back

10 years ago

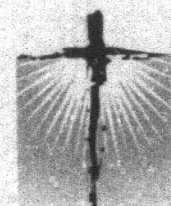
Cuba celebrates its first Christmas after the Communist government officially reinstates the holiday. The official celebration of Christmas had been absent from the island country for over three decades.

20 years ago

Southeastern Seminary fails to meet accreditation standards in three of four areas, according to a special study committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The trustees' move to a new conservative majority has resulted in the resignation of the president and seven other administrators.

50 years ago

Reports state that Mississippi organized 41 new churches and established 24 new missions the previous year. Texas led the states with Southern Baptist work with 165 new churches, followed by California with 120.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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VOL. 133

No. 2



YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

### SWBTS cuts budget

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Southwestern Seminary (SWBTS) in Ft. Worth is working to cut its budget by approximately 10%, or up to four million dollars, according to a news release from the seminary. The news release specifically identified two cutback areas: suspending the work of the Naylor Children's Center for at least 18 months, and suspending the Oxford Study Program/Traveling Scholar overseas on-site study trips with the exception of those directly related to the 2+2 missionary training program in the Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions. "We anticipate that other cutbacks in the budget will be necessary to ensure that Southwestern maintains its debt-free operational position and to be certain that revenues cover expenditures," said seminary president Paige Patterson. "This is a most regrettable circumstance and not of our own making..."



## BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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HNPBH, GBM XK MV CKH

OVDUVRV AV?

ZKBC VUWBH: QKNHM-

LUS

Clue: J = C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Colossians Four: Six.

## WHEN THE SHEEP TIP OVER

It was a few weeks before Christmas, but most of the Christmas decorations were in place. One church in my area had an outdoor nativity scene. It was not a live presentation but it had all of the characters with a number of animals and especially a lot of sheep. As is the norm in Mississippi during December days, it is oftentimes warm one day and then an arctic front will come through and it will be cold, even frigid for hours and maybe even a few days. So it was on this particular occasion. The big deal was that the strong, strong winds that accompanied the front that came through blew some of the decorations around and down. Within hours after the front arrived, I was passing by one of the manger scenes, and I could not help but slow down and chuckle. Everything was still intact except a few of the sheep had been blown over. Some of them were standing up just fine, but others were tipped over on their sides. I wanted to stop, go over, and straighten the sheep up, but I rationalized that they would probably just blow over again. I might get in trouble because someone could think that I was going out there and doing something to the sheep and maybe I was the one who was responsible for them being tipped over. So I did nothing except drive by and be amused at the sight of part of the flock being tipped over on their sides.

As I drove off, I thought to myself how appropriate this scene was. The Lord was among His flock, and some of them were tipped over. That indeed is the way life in the Lord's family and flock usually is. The sheep are tipped over, blown over, and for

whatever reason are incapacitated and lying on their sides. I have at times seen them in that condition, and at times, I have been in that condition. Have you ever had one of those tipped-over-on-your-side moments? If you have ever been in that shape you probably felt like most of us who have been blown over at some point or another, and you regretted your condition. You probably never anticipated being tipped over on your side, and you did not even want to be there. You may have even been embarrassed, hurt, and just overwhelmingly guilty because you did not stand up through the gales of life like the other sheep around you did. Well, of course, there are a few sheep that you may see who are tipped over too. You kind of breathe a sigh of relief or appreciation that some of the others are in the same shape that you are. That, of course, gives you no real consolation for being in your condition, but at least you are not alone.

In fact, when you think about it, the Bible is full of tipped-over members of the flock — great people that you may have read about, studied, and held up in great admiration, but they got tipped over in the strong winds of life. There are folks like Noah, Abraham, David, and Peter, and as you make the list and it gets longer and longer you soon began to realize that it is any and every one of us at some point or

other. The Scripture is absolutely correct: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). If you are a sheep that stood through some of the storms, it is easy to look around and pass judgment on the tipped-over ones as though they are weaker, not quite as spiritual, or at least do not stand facing the right direction so that the winds will not hit them full force — but mark it down, at some point or other, the winds will shift, and they may get blown over too.

Paul had great insight in the book of Galatians he

wrote, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

I conclude with just a few observations about tipped-over sheep, whether it is those outside in the nativity scene or whether it is those who are inside and part of the Lord's flock:

- All sheep get tipped over at one time or another.

- I noticed that none of the other standing sheep were trying to help the tipped over sheep get back on their feet.

- I remembered that I did not do anything either.

- I asked the Lord to work in my life and help me be a "picker upper" in the days ahead.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mcb.org).

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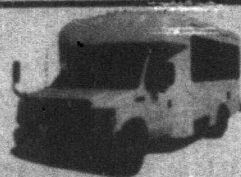
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**FULL-TIME MINISTRY ASSISTANT**  
needed: Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Road, Byram, MS 39272, 601-372-0132. Send resume to [jamie@hillcrestbyram.org](mailto:jamie@hillcrestbyram.org), [www.hillcrestbyram.org](http://www.hillcrestbyram.org).

**NURSERY WORKER NEEDED: BED-BABY** room, during all services and events. Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Road, Byram, MS 39272, [www.hillcrestbyram.org](http://www.hillcrestbyram.org). Mail resume to, or contact [jamie@hillcrestbyram.org](mailto:jamie@hillcrestbyram.org).

**BECKER BAPTIST CHURCH IN** Becker, Miss., Monroe Association is accepting resumes for a bi-vocational Minister of Music, or Music and Youth. Please send resumes to the attention of the search committee. Becker Baptist Church at P.O. Box 83, Becker, MS. 38821.



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## STAFF CHANGES

1. Big Level Church, Wiggins, has called Adam Whitaker as youth minister. Shown are Whitaker, Kim Whitaker, and pastor David Perry.

2. Victory Church, Lincoln County, has called Thomas Wicker as pastor. He and his wife Ruby come from Sallis Church, Attala County. The Wickers have three grown children.



1. Whitakers, Perry

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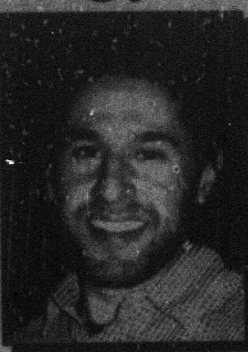
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**CHURCH PEW UPHOLSTERY, FREE** estimates. Davis Upholstery, Quitman, Miss., phone 601-776-6617.



# Papyrology revealing new insights into ancient texts

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—In a cramped room, students fix their eyes on a copy of Greek text, surrounded by glass cases containing copies of centuries-old Bibles and ancient texts. Some letters are clear, others nonexistent. Holes in the text give the document the appearance of moth-eaten fabric.



**Theophilos**

Deciphering the mystery of the holes wrought by time, weather, and ancient wars was the goal of students who were working in the New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies under Michael Theophilos, a 29-year-old Australian research scholar with a doctorate from Oxford who spent the fall semester at NOBTS.

It is the cross-disciplinary puzzle of language, history, archaeology, theology, and science that in part drives Theophilos, who conducted a three-day workshop on papyrology—the study of papyrus aimed at deciphering ancient Greek and Latin texts written on papyrus or other easily portable material.

The hands-on experience allowed students to experience reading papyrus texts in the original languages as well as English and examine what those texts—reflecting the fabric of daily life, such as ancient sales receipts and invitations to pagan feasts—mean for biblical interpretation.

The workshop's goal, Theophilos said, was to give students a deeper understanding of the historical context of biblical events.

"The goal for any student of

the text is to appreciate that the text we are reading comes from a very definite historical period," Theophilos said. "It is not something that happened in the ambiguous distant past. It's not something that is some kind of abstracted philosophical system we are reading in our text."

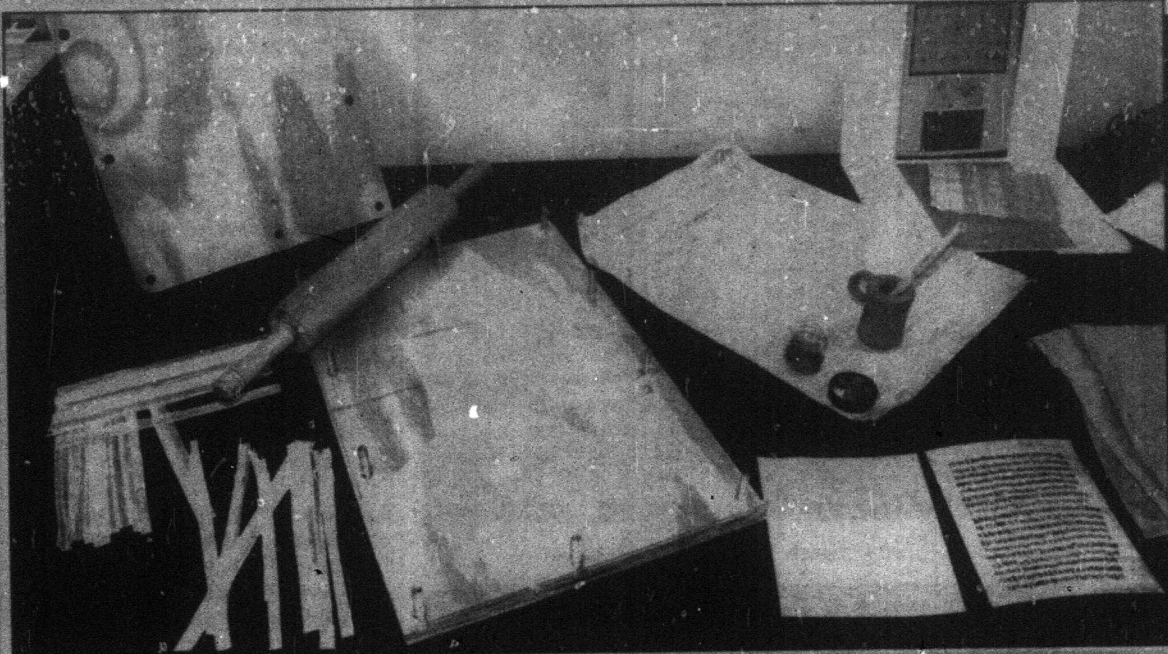
While at present the only New Testament manuscripts available are from the mid-second century, scholars do have access to original documents which chronicle life in the New Testament times. These extra-biblical documents bring a greater reality to the biblical text.

"It gives the Bible a greater humanity and historicity in the sense that it isn't something that merely was manifested from thin air," Theophilos said. "This is something that was in conversation with other documents in the ancient world."

Trying to piece together ancient manuscripts is "like a big jigsaw puzzle," Theophilos said. "There are going to be big gaps. One of the ways to piece things together is by understanding genre and context. Understanding genre is just as important as understanding language," he said.

For example, students of children's fairy tales might find a manuscript with the words "Once — a time" and know that the missing word is "upon," based on wording common to fairy tales. Similarly, a missing word from an ancient text can only be reconstructed with the appropriate knowledge of the genre.

For every closed gap, there



**HOW IT'S DONE**—A display at New Orleans Seminary's H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies illustrates papyrus-making processes. Papyrus, utilized as an writing surface in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, is made from stems of the papyrus sedge plant. (BP photo)

are countless mysteries and variants in the ancient texts to solve using a combination of science, art, history, archaeology, theology, language, and old-fashioned detective work.

Theophilos was drawn to the study of the ancient texts while teaching and preaching in Papua New Guinea. Doing outreach ministry in the outlying villages, he felt "a thirst to know more about the historical, political, and religious history of early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism."

Theophilos returned to Australia and immersed himself in Greek, Hebrew, Coptic, and Latin. As he studied, a light clicked on.

"I began to see the tremendous way the text just opened up through the study of ancient documents," he said.

Theophilos had high praise for the students he encountered at NOBTS and for the H. Milton Haggard Center. There, scholars labor over ancient texts, trying to solve the puzzle of the ancient world. Those discoveries have been shared with biblical scholars across the globe.

"At the basic level, [the center] is providing a very concrete tool to help people realize that the text that we have when we pick up our English versions has a very rich and complicated—but very interesting

— textual history," Theophilos said. "It's a tremendous lesson to learn. I think it's a very helpful way for people to get into the issue and see the aspects involved in this sort of study."

William Warren, director of the Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies and professor of New Testament and Greek at NOBTS, praised Theophilos' contributions to scholarship at the seminary during the semester.

"In-depth understanding of the setting in which the biblical events took place requires studying the data from the time periods of the events," Warren said. "Having a [visiting] specialist in some of that data has enhanced the experience of many students and faculty at NOBTS since he is an expert in the early papyrus manuscripts."

"He has opened windows into the world of Jesus and the early church by presenting and explaining the importance of letters, documents and New Testament fragments in lectures and a special workshop. His work is on the cutting edge of accessing the data that undergirds our understanding of the biblical world, with current work including the analysis of several additional New Testament papyrus fragments from the Oxyrhynchus finds in Egypt."

"His level of scholarship combined with his evangelical faith has provided a great example of how we can love God with all of our mind in the best possible sense."

Because of the cross-disciplinary nature of papyrology, only a handful of universities are at the head of the field. The

academic standards and demands are high. Knowledge of Greek must be impeccable. Students of the ancient texts must have Job-like patience.

"One of the things I've tried to communicate to students here is that when you get into this area, there's no need to rush," Theophilos said. "When you do rush, you're going to make some errors. It's almost a tedious type of patience you need to have."

Sometimes, that can be very frustrating. It's not like you spend a half-hour then get an article published."

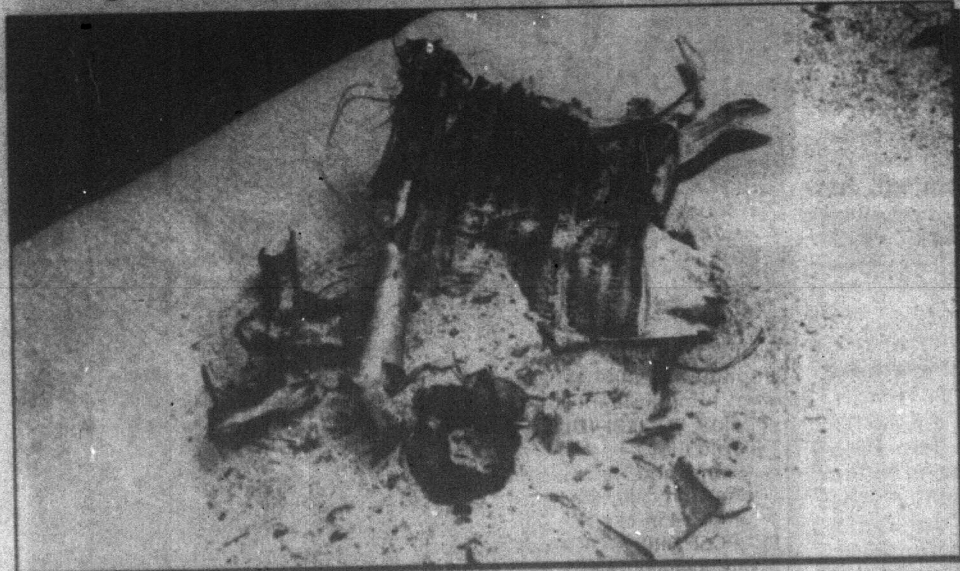
Theophilos recalled one of the first manuscripts he studied. "I spent at least two weeks reading five or six lines under the microscope. It requires language skills and a lot of patience. The things we're looking at are not printed texts. They have a history of their own. They're crumpled. They're in dirt. They're in sand."

There is another virtue that comes into play when wrestling with ancient manuscripts that have survived time, war, weather, sand, and silt.

"All learning and scholarship has to have an element of humility in the sense that 'this is the best sense of the text that we have,'" Theophilos said. "It's not being a relativist. It's not being a postmodernist in any regard. One person has called it critical realism."

"We believe that there is something real there and we're being critical about how we interact with that because we're human beings. We bubble with emotions and hormones and all sorts of things that make us human."

"We're not robots. We're not scanning bar codes. It's something more than that."



**INCOMPLETE TEXT**—A display at New Orleans Seminary's H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies illustrates the condition of many ancient documents upon discovery. A visiting scholar at the seminary is helping students learn the fine points of papyrology. (BP photo)



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Juniper Grove Church Women on Mission



2. Moak's Creek Church



3. McDonald and McNeil



4. Fitzsimmons ordination

1. The Women on Mission at Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville, prepared 36 bags of fruit, candy, etc., for people in the community. Shown are the participants.

2. Moak's Creek Church, Lincoln Co. Association, held a parent/child dedication Nov. 23. Shown, back row, are Christy, Chris, and Myles Rue Elkins, and Michael Alexander; center row, Daniel, Stephanie, and Alana Caroline Hux, and Chris, Kasey, and Jacey Louise Hutson; front row, Logan Hux.

3. Grace United Church, Decatur, licensed Michael Daniel McNeil to preach Dec. 7. Shown are Mark McDonald and McNeil.

4. Sardis Church, Smith Association, ordained Timothy Brian Fitzsimmons to the gospel ministry Nov. 6. Fitzsimmons is serving as bi-vocational pastor at Sardis. Shown are Robin Nichols, Scott Cappleman, Fitzsimmons, and Bruce Cappleman.

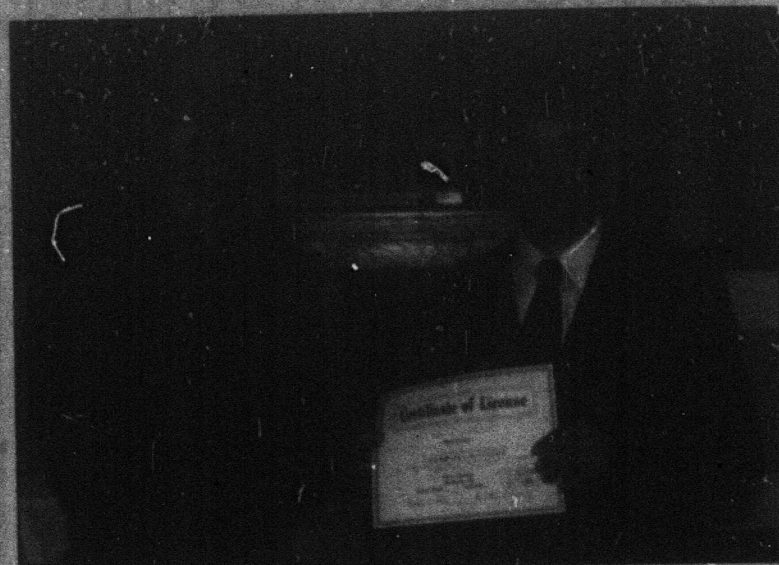
5. Siloam Church, Meadville, licensed Dane Hodges to the gospel ministry Nov. 23. He is available for supply and can be reached at (601) 384-5138. Shown are pastor Leon Wallace and Hodges.

6. The first through sixth graders of Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto, presented the musical Angels We Have Heard. Shown are the participants.

7. The RAs and GAs of Richburg Church, Hattiesburg, went to the Windham House nursing home Dec. 17 to sing carols, visit with the residents, and hand out candy canes. Shown are the participants.

8. South 28th Ave. Church, Hattiesburg, ordained Mike Nicholas as deacon Dec. 28, 2008. Shown, from left, are Tom Williams, Nicholas, pastor Greg Burks, Jack Roderick, and Gregory Kriedik.

9. Crossgates Church, Brandon, is presenting First Place for Health, beginning with a Change Your Life event, Jan. 10, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Cost is \$35 in advance and \$45 at the door. Breakfast and lunch included. For information, call (601) 825-2562 or visit [www.crossgates.org](http://www.crossgates.org).



5. Hodges ordination



6. Children, Calvary Church



7. Richburg Church RAs and GAs



8. Deacon ordination, S. 28th Ave. Church



## JUST FOR THE RECORD

10. Shiloh Church, Sontag, ordained Delane Ervin Nov. 30. Shown are Wilson Farnham, Ervin, and Andy Fullington.

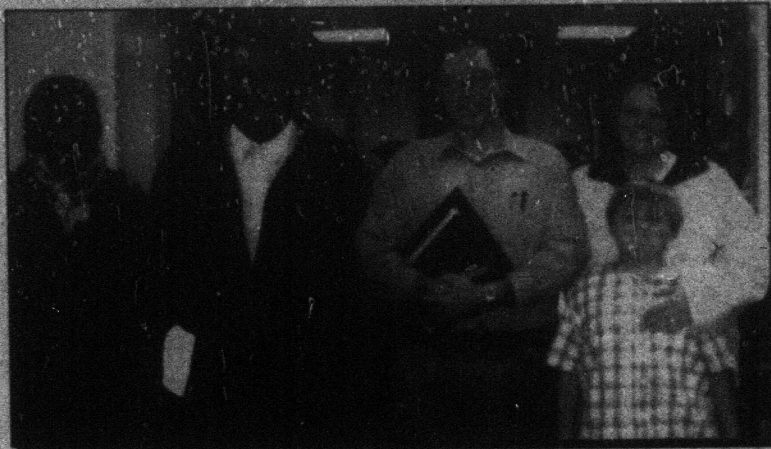
11. Macedonia Church, Petal, recently held a note-burning ceremony for the loan secured to build the new sanctuary building in the sum of \$52,000. Shown are Harry Harrington and interim pastor Jimmie Garrard.

12. The Mississippi Healthy Marriage Initiative will host a one-day statewide training session for the 10 Great Dates education program Jan. 13, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., at First Church, Jackson. The training is designed to equip and empower faith-based and community leaders with an exciting, affordable, and easy-to-implement program to help strengthen families and

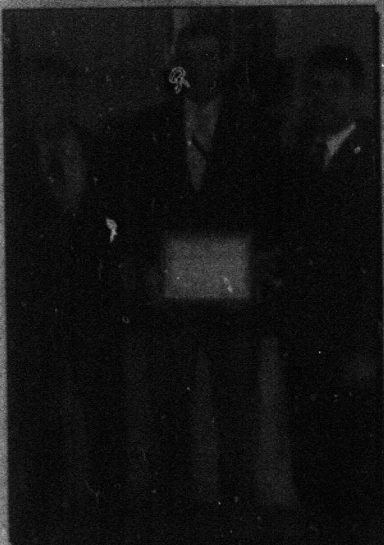
marriages in Mississippi. The training will be led by David and Claudia Arp. Free; advance registration required. For more information or to sign up, visit [www.marriagemississippi.com](http://www.marriagemississippi.com) or call (662) 325-3080.

13. New deacons were recently installed at Calvary Church, Parchman. Shown, from left, are Robert Neal, his wife, Marvin Overstreet, his wife, and son Damien. Overstreet was also ordained.

14. The GAs of Branch Church, Morton, held their annual Christmas card mailbox. Shown are Columbia Holeman, Julie Mahaffey, Karleigh Mahaffey, Olivia Lampkin, and Jennifer Lampkin.



13. Deacon installation, Calvary Church



10. Ervin ordination



11. Note burning, Macedonia Church



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS



14. GAs, Branch Church

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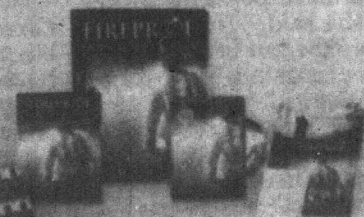
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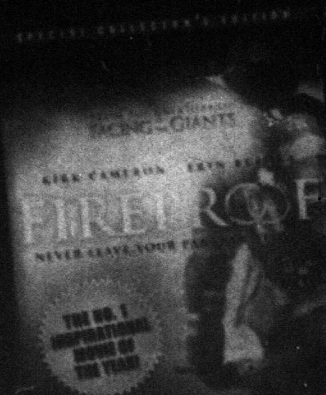
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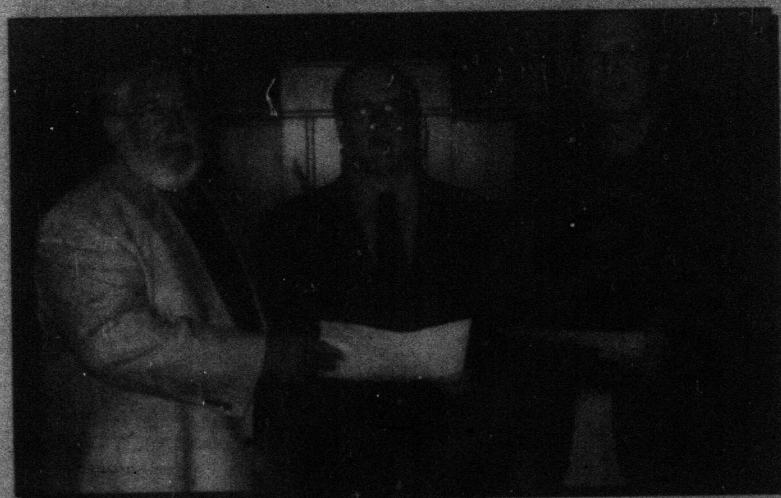
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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Deacon ordination, Sylvarena Church



2. Deacon ordination, Flowood Church



3. Baby dedication, Moak's Creek Church

1. Sylvarena Church, Smith County, ordained Ray Howard Tullos as deacon Dec. 14, 2008. Shown are Hueston Adkins, Tullos, his wife Linda, and pastor George Stockman.

2. Flowood Church, Flowood, recently ordained Clyde Needham and Bill Mays as deacons. Shown, from left, are Donnie Thomas, Needham, and Mays.

3. Moak's Creek Church, Lincoln Co., held a baby dedication Nov. 23, 2008. Shown, back row, are Bobby and Kristy Gates II with Lucy Caroline Gates and Michael Alexander; front row, Micheal and Christy Miller with Madelyn Carol Miller, and Dewayne and Margaret Temple with Emma Louellen Temple.

4. Zion Hill Church, Union County, licensed Matthew Wayne Mink to the ministry Dec. 21, 2008. He is a student at Northeast Community College, Booneville. Shown are Mink and transitional pastor L. Wayne Frederick.

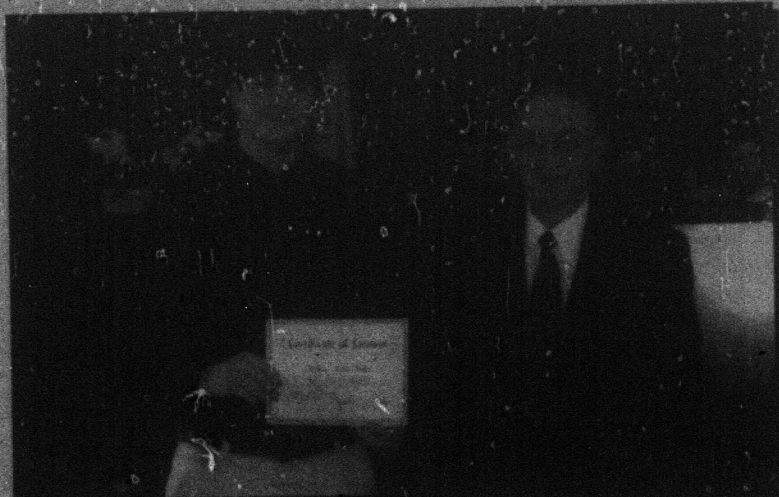
5. The children's committee of Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto, presented the younger children in a program called We Give Thanks for the members of the church. Shown are some of the children.

6. The GAs and Acteens of First Church, Marks, hosted a happy birthday Jesus party for Peggy Johnson and her five children. Shown are the participants.



BAPTISTS

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[www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org)



4. Zion Hill Church



5. Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto



6. First Church, Marks

## Poll: large majority of Americans favor abortion restrictions

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — More than 80% of Americans believe abortion should be either prohibited or limited, according to a new survey.

The poll of U.S. adults shows 11% support a total ban on abortion, 38% favor restricting abortion to cases of rape, incest, or a threat to the life of the mother, and 33% endorse limiting the procedure to the first three or six months of pregnancy. Nine percent favored unlimited abortion rights throughout pregnancy.

Abortions may be performed at any stage of pregnancy in the United States, based on the Supreme Court's

1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions. Under more recent high court rulings, however, states may enact some restrictions on the procedure.

The online poll of 2,341 adults, commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and conducted Dec. 10-12 by Harris Interactive, also found strong majorities favor specific laws limiting abortion.

The data was weighted to be representative of the U.S. population. Among the findings:

- 88% support informed consent laws, which require abortion providers to inform mothers of possible risks to their health and of abortion alternatives.

- 76% back laws that protect health-care providers from being required to perform abortions or to refer women to doctors who will conduct the procedures.

- 73% favor laws requiring parental involvement in a minor's abortion.

- 63% support laws banning the use of government funds to pay for abortions.

A USCCB official described the results as remarkable. "Support for these measures cuts across 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' positions," said Deidre McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications with the USCCB's Secretariat of Pro-life Activities.

Even 35% of those who favored unlimited abortion rights supported at least three of the six abortion-restrictive laws presented to respondents in the survey, she said. "This research indicates how out of touch pro-abortion groups are with mainstream America," McQuade said.

Abortion-rights advocates in Congress are expected to promote legislation overturning pro-life policies instituted by the federal government under the Bush administration, including those barring federal funding of abortion and abortion advocacy.

President-elect Barack Obama has endorsed the Freedom of Choice Act, which would strike

down all limitations on abortion and guarantee that abortion remains legal even if the Roe ruling someday is overturned.

As an Illinois state legislator, Obama was instrumental in blocking proposals that would have limited abortions in that state, including the partial birth abortion procedure during which a fully-formed infant is wrenched from the womb and killed by a stab wound to the brain inflicted with a pair of surgical scissors.

Obama also publicly stated during the presidential campaign that should either of his daughters become pregnant, he would not "punish" them with a baby.



# Adult Ministry Institute examines age roles in church

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Young adults increasingly are making an impact in the world, "but it isn't so much happening in the church," said Jason Hayes, young adult ministry specialist for LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville and one of the speakers at the recent Adult Ministry Institute attended by ministers and young adult leaders from across the country.

Information from LifeWay Research studies guided much of the conference's content, addressing challenges that churches face in reaching young adults as well as baby boomers and those in the "legacy" generation of adults age 55 and over.

"We heard in our research from both church and unchurched young adults who said they wanted to go beyond the normal 'hellos' and congeniality of church," Hayes said. "They wanted to go beyond the geographic location of community and connect with social geography."

Young adults have "more interest in community than anything that could be put on any menu in any coffee shop or restaurant," Hayes said, noting, "It is not the product but the experience."

Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, said the challenge for churches is not to change what they believe in order to make Christianity more palatable in an era of pluralistic viewpoints, but to communicate those beliefs more effectively to unchurched young adults.

"Too many churches choose their traditions over their children and grandchildren," said Stetzer, co-author of a new book, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*, with Hayes and Rick Stanley. "I just don't believe that the standard pick-up evangelism lines we've used for all these years will work with this generation. I think it's going to require long-term conversations and relationships."

Unchurched young adults have no problem believing that Christ rose from the dead, Stetzer said, but they also

believe that Buddha walked on water and Muhammad healed people. They believe almost anything, Stetzer said, but it doesn't lead to salvation through Christ.

"Don't leave this conference thinking if you make your church and yourself cool, you'll attract young adults," Stetzer said. "The answer is to make your church more godly and true to the Word of God. That is what will draw young adults."

Baby boomers, meanwhile, want their lives to matter and they want to make connections and networks that will meet their needs, said Bill Craig, director of LifeWay's business and ministry development area.

Churches must find ways to help boomers — the generation born between 1946-64 — invest their lives in significant ministries, Craig said, and churches must help boomers find meaning in their relationships to the church and to each other in order to engage them in congregational life.

Concerning ministry to adults 55 and over, Dan Allen of McGregor Church in Fort Myers, Fla., recounted that when he went on staff at the church, he discovered how complex the transition from median adults to older adults is for people.

"At McGregor, it was so that at 55, I was suddenly in the same group as my 78-year-old mother-in-law," said

Allen, the church's minister to legacy adults. "Now, I love my mother-in-law and we have a great relationship, but we don't share the same interests or want to do the same things."

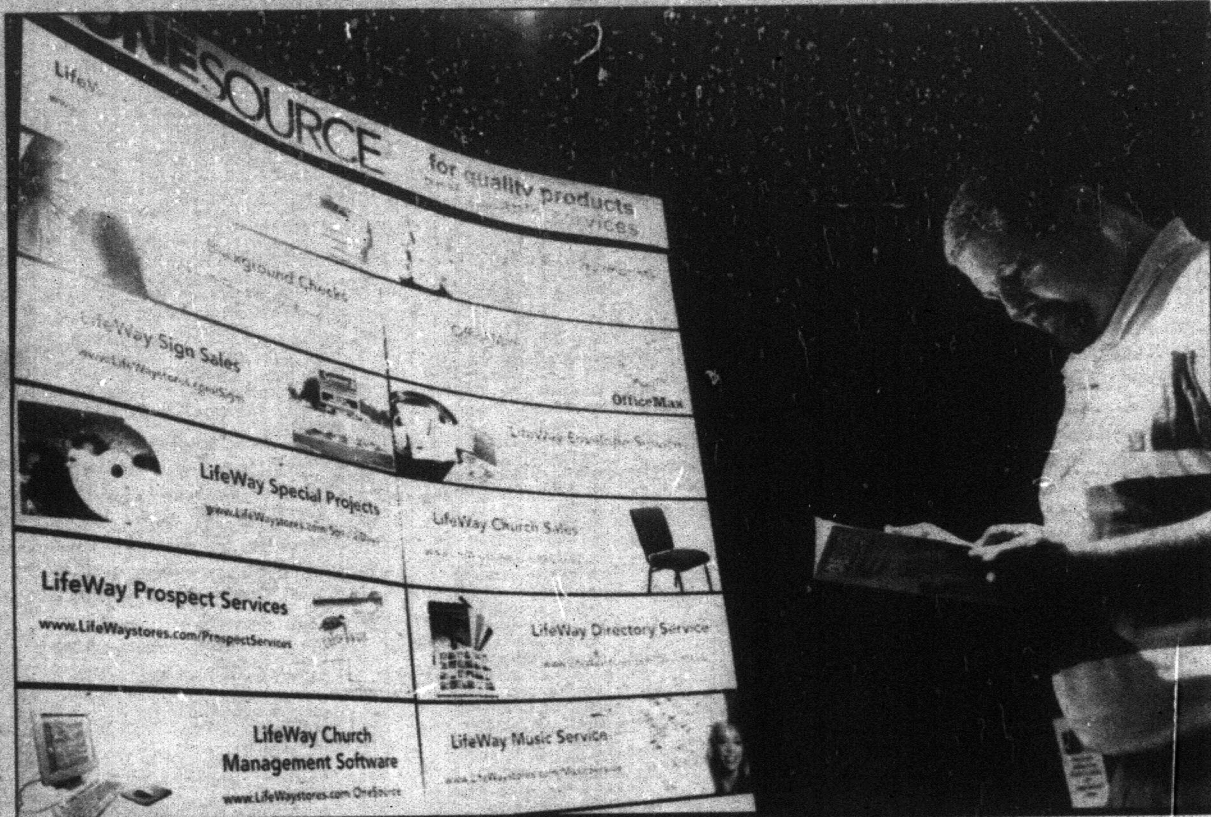
In ministering to this group, Allen said they are not ready to be called "senior" adults, nor are they thinking about retirement or moving into 55-plus communities. They are willing to commit to significant ministry and to short-term projects, he said, and they want to be involved in celebrative worship.

Many of these adults are the "sandwich generation," dealing with children still at home and aged parents who need

their care, Allen added. "They need help with the family situations," he said. "This takes up a tremendous amount of their time and resources."

Alan Raughton, LifeWay's lead adult ministry specialist and coordinator of the Adult Ministry Institute, said participants were provided time during the conference to develop plans to take back to their churches to improve their adult ministries.

"If they didn't get to do those practical steps here," Raughton said, "when they got home the tyranny of the urgent would take over and they might not get to plan... for reaching these adults."



**GOOD INFORMATION** — Sam Wilson, outreach pastor at Longview Point Church in Hernando, checks out literature on a resource table during the recent Adult Ministry Institute at the headquarters of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. (BP photo)

## Women gather in Nashville for national leadership training

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — To help women in their churches "know Christ, grow in Christ, and find their place of serving in His Kingdom," 500-plus women attended a recent Women's Ministry National Leadership Training Forum sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Chris Adams, LifeWay's senior lead women's ministry specialist, added to her description of the gathering by noting that the Southern Baptist entity seeks "to help equip women who are leading women's ministries in their churches to reach and disciple women for Christ."

Eleven LifeWay Bible study authors such as Mary Kassian were on hand to provide participants with information about an array of resources. Kassian, author of *In My Father's House: Conversation Peace; Vertically Inclined*; and the newly released *Knowing God by Name*, shared about her pro-

gression from a woman doing a Bible study with college women in western Canada to seeing her work published.

"It just happened one step at a time," she said. "I was just obedient to what God asked of me at each step and He was with me for the next step."

Jennifer Rothschild, author of a LifeWay Bible study, *Me, Myself and Lies*, slated for release in February, spoke to an "early bird" group who came in before the official beginning of the forum.

Everyone has about 50,000 thoughts per day, Rothschild said, noting that most are organizational, non-reactive types of thoughts such as: "Where are my keys?" but a small percentage of those thoughts are dangerous, such as, "I'm so stupid." Those are the ones to be on guard against, said Rothschild, whose LifeWay study is based on her book, *Self Talk, Soul Talk*.

Rothschild used the

metaphor of a closet to explain that everyone has "thought closets" where all the "stuff" — useful and junky — is stored. The thoughts sometimes come from lies originating with other people, said Rothschild. Other times they come from dark places within a person or from a culture that only values wealth, power and physical perfection.

Every so often, the closets need to be cleaned out, as challenging as that can be, Rothschild said.

Rhonda Kelley, an author and leader of the women's ministry certificate program at New Orleans Seminary where her husband serves as president, noted at her Stepping Up to the Mic session that a church's women's ministry leader likely will be called upon to speak at some point.

"Many people are paralyzed with fear when they anticipate speaking in front of others," Kelley said, "but we

know that Scripture tells us that fear is not of the Lord. God will prepare you for what He wants you to do."

Although disabling fear is bad, Kelley said, "A healthy dose of fear causes me to be totally dependent on God. I know that I am not able to speak to and lead groups under my own power and capabilities, but I also know that with God I can do anything."

Always do a thorough job of preparation before speaking, she advised, suggesting that an outline is a good way to stay on track. "When you get scared, your mind is the first thing to go. When that happens, take a deep breath and quickly pray for confidence and recall."

In addition to learning skills for growing the women's ministry in their own churches, participants heard a pastor's reminder that leading other women to God must begin with cultivating one's own godliness.

David Landrith of Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., told the audience, "In general we recognize, as pastors, the crucial role that women play," especially when a vibrant women's ministry is a catalyst for other ministries in a church. He cautioned, however, that even Christian women can "fall prey" to the traps of the world rather than pursuing personal godliness in order to help other women do the same.

"Who does God want to use you to call up [for women's ministry] by the behavior that you exhibit?" Landrith asked. "When your behavior is the kind that God has called you to, that behavior has a huge impact."

*Editor's note: LifeWay will offer two Women's Ministry Leadership Training Forums in 2009. For more information, visit [www.lifeway.com/women](http://www.lifeway.com/women).*



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further report with love and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DEC. 13 - DEC. 24

### HONORS

Faith SSC, FBC-Grenada  
Mrs. Barbara M. Branscome  
FBC Winona Staff  
Mrs. Helen P. Daves  
Northside Elementary School Staff  
Mrs. Joy Tyner  
Brian Adkins  
Dr. Todd N. Adkins  
Natalie Adkins  
Dr. Todd N. Adkins  
Jack & Ann Alexander  
Mr. & Mrs. John D. Sadler  
Stuart & Philene Allen  
Ms. Dolly Hooper  
Mr. & Mrs. Perry (Patsy) Atherton  
Mrs. Virginia H. Atherton  
MAJ-GEN Rupert H. Burris  
Buster & Joan Bailey  
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Dr. Daniel Boone  
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Dr. Jeffrey Clark  
Dr. Bradley Bowlin  
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Mr. & Mrs. Bill Callaway  
Paul & Jo Helen Watson  
Dr. & Mrs. Bob Carter  
Paul & Jo Helen Watson

Donnie & Sue Caughman  
Randy, Ashley & Chloe Shomon  
Sue & Donnie Caughman  
Chantell, Billy & Baden Miles  
Faye Charnell  
W. S. & Ruth Pansano  
Tim Chennault  
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Joy SSC, FBC-McComb  
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Mrs. Frances Clower  
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Dr. Edward Daly  
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Rev. Phillip Dancy  
Mrs. Helen P. Daves  
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Paul & Jo Helen Watson  
Rev. T. R. Dasey  
Mrs. Helen P. Daves  
Albert & Lisa Davis  
Mrs. Martha Hederman  
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# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Discover Fresh Hope

Psalm 42:1-43:5

By Bill Patterson

Do you ever feel down? I don't mean the temporary loss of a peaceful feeling due a cold. No, I'm talking really down. Most of us have been there. Three times in Psalms 42 and 43 the psalmist asks, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?"

Sometimes it's a physical thing. The Prophet Elijah, fresh from the powerful high of Mt. Carmel but weakened by a long run from Jezebel, wanted to die (1 Kings 18-19). God sent him needed sleep and food. Sometimes it is a psychological thing. It's no more wrong for a depressed Christian to visit a counselor or to take prescribed medication than for a diabetic to visit a medical doctor or to take insulin.

Sometimes it's a thing of circumstances. When we lose a loved one or friend we feel sor-

row and hurt. Sometimes it is a satanic thing. God told Simon Peter that Satan would thresh him like wheat (Luke 22:31). Sometimes it is a spiritual thing. If we get away from the study of God's word, break God's commands, or fail to worship with God's people, then we have pulled away from our source of life.

The Bible is not silent when we need help. Our Lord gives assistance to those who seek it and hope to those who feel down. The Psalmist showed, however, that the help may not come when we expect it.

**Understand Your Soul's Deep**

**Desire (Psalm 42:1-5)**

Surrounded by scoffers (v. 3) and depressed, the psalmist longed deeply for God. In a striking image, he pictured a thirsty deer eager to get to the stream (v. 1). The writer's dry-

ness produced just as strong a craving for the presence of the Lord.

Israelites were required to visit Jerusalem for worship three times a year. The psalmist couldn't, however (vs. 3-4). Likely, he'd been captured and carried away into slavery. It is possible illness or some other hardship had come his way.

Despite outward circumstances, believers today can know God's presence because of His indwelling Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, genuine worship with God's people advances our understanding and enhances our feeling of His presence.

Our deepest need is to know God. He can use our times of trouble to create an inner thirst and to draw us closer to Him.

**Depend on God's Faithful Love (Psalm 42:6-11)**

The psalmist's situation was desperate. He wondered if God had forgotten him. Still, he believed God was his

"rock" (v. 9) and therefore he challenged his own feelings. He knew he would yet praise God. Christians can learn from the Psalmist to doubt those feelings that contradict God's word.

The Lord Jesus may have had these Psalms in mind when He spoke from the garden of Gethsemane, "My soul is deeply grieved..." (Matt. 26:38 NASB). He may have had them in mind when He spoke from the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Even strong Christians feel abandoned at times. There is, as St. John of the Cross titled his book, a dark night of the soul.

God seems to withdraw from us at times to grow our trust. Many Christians testify that they grew more when they didn't sense God's presence and had to rely on His promises than when they closely knew His reality.

**Follow God's Light and Truth (Psalm 43:1-5)**

The psalmist turned to prayer, asking God to vindicate him and deliver him.

God is not limited by our situations in life or by the feelings of our hearts. He still hears and answers prayer. He delights in the prayers of His children. He tells us to pray instead of worry (Phil. 4:6).

Worry and self-pity are selfish. They say to God that we depend on ourselves. Prayer says to God that we depend on Him.

The cure for depression is neither to look inward at our feelings, nor to look back at our past, nor to look around at our problems. Look within and become depressed. Look around and become distressed. Look to God and find sweet rest.

The cure for feeling down is to do what the psalmist did. We can challenge ourselves. We can become aware of how valuable the Lord is to us. We can pray to Him. When we do, like the psalmist we will once more, "Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him" (42:5c; 11c; 43:5c).

Patterson is pastor of First Church, Richland

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## What hope do you have?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

By Joyce C. Rogers

The Thessalonians had questions about the future of their deceased loved ones and friends. They expected the return of the Lord Jesus in their lifetime. Would the deceased believers go to heaven with them or would they be left behind? Would they be reunited with them or not?

**Our Hope As Christians**

Paul did not want these new believers to experience the sorrow that unbelievers did at the death of loved ones. They needed to know what was to happen. The word "sleep" was used as a metaphor for death. Believers have the hope of eternal life with God.

Biblical "hope" is not the same as the word "hope" in worldly terms. Biblical hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past

guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future (Holman Bible Dictionary). Biblical hope is a sure thing whereas worldly hope is a wish.

**Our Hope: Christ's**

**Resurrection and Return**

The very foundation of our faith as Christians requires belief in the death, resurrection and promised return of our Savior, Jesus. Christ promised that we would rise again, even as He did.

Following the death of Lazarus, Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live" (John 11:25 HCSB). Jesus demonstrated this power over death when He called Lazarus out of the grave (John 11:43, 44). He also raised the widow's son

(Luke 7:15) and Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22 HCSB).

**Our Hope: Christians' Resurrection and Reunion**

Grief is normal and expected. There are stages which most people go through to gain acceptance of a death. Christians do grieve, but not like those who have no hope.

Paul's message here is to inform and comfort the Thessalonians. Those who have "fallen asleep" will not be left out at the second coming. In fact, the dead in Christ will rise first. "Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17 HCSB).

The coming of the Lord will be a well announced event. There will be a "shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first"

(v. 16). This will not happen in a corner. I believe everyone, everywhere will know without a doubt what is happening.

Believers will be reunited with loved ones. We will know each other. Our physical bodies will die, but not our spirits. "Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body" (1 Thess. 4:17 HCSB).

Jesus' post-resurrection body was physical and spiritual. He ate fish in the presence of His disciples (Luke 24:41-43). It is implied that He ate breakfast with them in John 21 when He asked them to bring ashore some of the fish they had just caught. But he was not limited by time and space. He appeared at will through closed doors. Those who saw Jesus recognized Him after His resurrection.

**Our Hope: Comfort**

It is natural for believers to want to know what happens after death. We may not necessarily understand even all that the Scriptures tell us. I think we can be satisfied with the assurance that God loves us and will continue to love us and be with us in death and eternal life with

Him. Isaiah 43:1-3a is very, very comforting and reassuring to me personally.

Our biblical hope is sure. We can know we have been redeemed. If anyone is unsure, he should pray and ask God to give him assurance.

What glorious prospects we have to live with God forever! How trifling the troubles of this world will seem. There will be no more pain, no sorrow, no fear, and no tears.

We will have the Triune God, redeemed friends and loved ones, the prophets of old, and angels for companions. We will worship God forever.

The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Even Jesus did not know; only the Father knows when this will occur. There is no need to be caught unprepared. People who live in the light (believers) are prepared. In life or death, the Christian is in Christ, and that relationship cannot be broken. Let us encourage and comfort each other with these words.

Rogers is a member of Main Street Church, Hattiesburg.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

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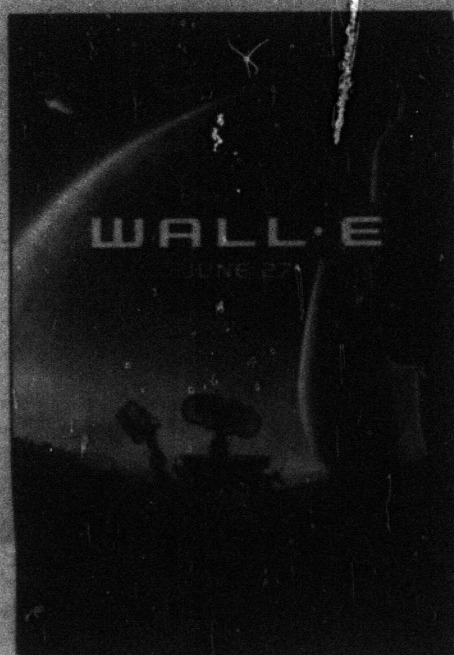


# 2008 movie crop: best of the best, worst of the worst

By Phil Boatwright  
Baptist Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (BP) — At the end of the year the studios bring out their big guns, the motion pictures they hope will garner prestige and awards attention. Most of those are not on my list for the best films of 2008. The reason? Though that's where you usually find the best acting, directing, etc., all too often these films dwell on negative aspects of nature, many containing huge amounts of profane language and excessive everything else.

I chose films I believe uplifted the spirit of man as well as entertained. They are in no particular order. Before viewing these movies, please visit [pre-viewonline.org](http://pre-viewonline.org) for full reviews and the reasons for the ratings.



## THE BEST

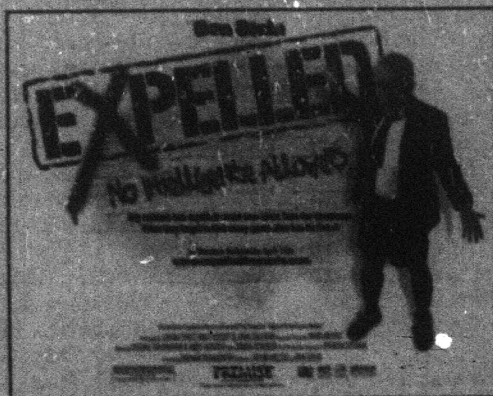
• **WALL-E** (rated G). The most original film of the summer, WALL-E was both funny and touching.

Despite a rather hypocritical handling of environmental issues (Disney & Pixar, each renown for non-biodegradable excess), the makers of WALL-E gave the public a fascinating, cuddly, and humorous adventure. Both Disney and Pixar remain dedicated to the premise that an involving story is central to a great movie.

These two studios make sure that special effects and CGI sparkle add to — rather than replace — interesting characters or thought-provoking narrative. WALL-E contains an overall sense of wonder missing in most films aimed at families.

Honorable mention: Bolt, rated PG for mild action and peril. Many find this film about a TV star dog who discovers he doesn't really have superpowers more amusing than WALL-E. — and in my opinion, Bolt is a perfect family film — but that first half hour of WALL-E is adroit craftsmanship. It harkens back to great episodes of Rod Serling's Twilight Zone.

• **Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed** (PG for thematic material and some disturbing images. Also, there is some mild language.) I may be the only critic in America with this one on a "best of" list. It mocks man's all-knowing, all-seeing intellectual conceit. The provocative film unnerves by pointing out that our nation's universities, many of which



once embraced a reverence for God, are now helmed by those who don't.

• **I.O.U.S.A.** (PG for some thematic elements). This documentary examines the rapidly growing national debt and its consequences for the United States and its citizens. Before attending the screening, I couldn't imagine a film I'd rather not watch, so I suspect that might be your first reaction, too, but if there's a tiger in the room you need to know it. This film tells you how big the tiger is.

• **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian** (PG for epic battle action and violence). Though this sequel is more action driven than the first episode, character development has by no means been abandoned. Between the many armchair-grabbing battle sequences, the intricate plot and the growth of the main characters, the film will likely serve to open a rewarding dialogue between parent and child.

The Christ-like symbolism found in the pivotal character Aslan and the meaning of God's silence at times in our lives are addressed with transparency.

• **Valkyrie** (PG-13 for violence and brief strong language). Based on the true story of Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (portrayed by Tom Cruise), the film tells of the daring plot to kill Adolf Hitler. Aided by a sophisticated camera drive, the director's clever visceral style, and a fine supporting cast, Valkyrie becomes a topnotch action thriller.

It's a testament to the writer/director that we're sitting there fully believing the would-be assassins might just achieve their task. Now that's good cinema technique, when it causes us to hope for a new outcome.

• **Steep** (PG for extreme sports action and brief language). Steep is an interesting documentary about men and women who live for danger. Like surfers searching for the tallest wave, extreme mountain skiers attempt to conquer the highest and most inaccessible adversary.

Best moment: Three skiers are photographed from a helicopter while getting caught in an avalanche. Not only a thrilling, armrest-grabber of a moment, the aftermath also shows a camaraderie known only to those who risk their lives together. That's awesome, dude.

## THE WORST

It's difficult for me to say something negative about the work of others, which is a unique temperament for a movie reporter, so, even though I'm going to go all Addison DeWitt (the acerbic critic from All About Eve) in this article, I want to stress that those involved in these monstrosities — I mean, films — are talented and I mean nothing disrespectful toward them or their abilities.

It's the concepts of these movies and their final cuts with which I take exception, so beware. In the words of Bette Davis, "Fasten your seat belts, it's going to be a bumpy night."

• **27 Dresses** (PG-13 for language, some innuendo and sexuality). This wasn't a movie. It was a lab experiment. It's as if Dr. Frankenstein spliced together parts of unsold sitcoms, then jolted his monster to life with bolts of crudity and crassness. By film's end, I wanted to lead the angry mob to torch the castle.

• **The Love Guru** (PG-13 for crude and sexual content throughout, language, some comic violence, and drug references). Mike Myers is a funny man, but he also admits to digging up a laugh wherever it can be mined. With his latest film, Myers is not content with potty humor; he spends much of his time in the sewer.



• **Over Her Dead Body** (PG-13 for sexual content and language). Over Her Dead Body was a comedy about a dead woman who haunts her man's new girlfriend. It was an attempt to make a movie star out of a TV star (Eva Longoria Parker).

She attempts to rise to the big leagues by playing an obnoxious ghost, the most unlikely screen character of recent memory.

• **Religulous** (R for some language and sexual material). Religulous follows political humorist Bill Maher as he travels around the globe interviewing people about God. "Religion must die so mankind can live," says Maher at the end of his docu-diatribes.

In his polluted assessment of religion, Maher managed to avoid discussions with theologians or folks versed in public speaking. Not once does he give an example of religious people adding anything positive to the culture or our world. Never does he see the life-changing transformation of knowing Christ, but only the corruption by those who use religion for their own ends.

What's more, one gets the impression that Maher would have people of faith boiled with their own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through the heart. Bah, humbug.

• **Rachel Getting Married** (R for language and brief sexuality). This film is making most critics' best lists. Well, I've been wrong many times in my life. Now it's their turn. It just doesn't seem that long ago that I viewed another wedding movie steeped in family conflict, Margot At the Wedding. What an uplifting little charmer that was. (I'm saying this with an air of sarcasm).

While I am desperate for an insightful drama from the land that giveth an abundance of superhero action adventures, both Margot and Rachel disappoint because they revel in their melancholy spirit. They do, however, serve a purpose. Both these movies remind the filmgoer that unless your patriarch is Dracula and Jeffrey Dahmer is your cousin, your own family ain't all that bad.

## MIGHT HAVE BEENS

• **The Dark Knight** (PG-13 for intense sequences of violence and some menace). Writer/director Christopher Nolan breathed new life into a stale franchise with his Batman Begins back in 2005. Alas, my main complaint with his follow-up is a familiar one, having to do with the film's violence. I'm not sure how they managed a PG-13 with its overwhelming amounts of intense, brutal and sadistic savagery.

As I've said several times, it just seems to take more and more desensitizing screen work to make audiences feel something. What does that say about us?

• **Leatherheads** (PG-13 for strong language) George Clooney and Renée Zellweger star in this romantic comedy set against the backdrop of America's nascent pro-football league in 1925. With its brassy score, golden hue look, and award-worthy art and set decoration — plus a witty script that incorporates the right touches of zaniness, whimsy and heart — the production is one of the best of the year.

Now for that ointment-covered fly. Clooney profanes God's name in nearly every film he stars. He does it here as well, and to prove that women are just as emancipated as men, Zellweger also uses the profane term.

Boatwright is a Kansas City-based entertainment critic who reviews films for [pre-viewonline.org](http://pre-viewonline.org) and is a regular columnist for Baptist Press.

